

**Texas A&M International University  
Core Curriculum Institutional Effectiveness Review (CCIER)**

**Core Curriculum Academic Discipline: COMMUNICATION**

**Assessment Period Covered: Sept. 1, 2009 to May 31, 2010**

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**The Core Curriculum Institutional Effectiveness Review is directed at Goal 1: Academics of the Texas A&M International University 2006-2010 Strategic Plan:**

Develop, maintain, assess, and improve academic programs, administrative/educational support services and student services, to admit, retain, and graduate students who achieve established learning outcomes designed to prepare them for success in their chosen careers.

**Institutional Mission**

Texas A&M International University, a Member of The Texas A&M University System, prepares students for leadership roles in their chosen profession in an increasingly complex, culturally diverse state, national, and global society ... Through instruction, faculty and student research, and public service, Texas A&M International University embodies a strategic point of delivery for well-defined programs and services that improve the quality of life for citizens of the border region, the State of Texas, and national and international communities.

**Core Curriculum Mission**

At Texas A&M International University, the Core curriculum introduces students to academic disciplines which form the foundation of human thought: mathematics, science, history, language, literature, the arts, and social and behavioral sciences. Our Core is conceived to open new areas of learning for our students and to foster skills necessary for success in higher education.

As they move through this course of study, students are encouraged, as their knowledge increases, to develop the capacity to articulate and support a thesis, to think critically, to synthesize their observations and to perceive analogies and relationships between seemingly diverse ideas and intellectual pursuits.

**Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Exemplary Educational Objectives for the following academic discipline:**

**COMMUNICATION**

1. To understand and demonstrate writing and speaking processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing, and presentation.
2. To understand the importance of specifying audience and purpose and to select appropriate communication choices.
3. To understand and appropriately apply modes of expression, i.e., descriptive, expository, narrative, scientific, and self-expressive, in written, visual, and oral communication.
4. To participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.
5. To understand and apply basic principles of critical thinking, problem solving, and technical proficiency in the development of exposition and argument.
6. To develop the ability to research and write a documented paper and/or to give an oral presentation.

Section I: Planning and Implementation

**Outcome(s)**

*From the list above, identify the outcome(s) that will be focused upon this year. (It is recommended that academic disciplines rotate through their entire set of Exemplary Educational Objectives over a multi-year period. Thus, disciplines are encouraged to focus only on a few outcomes each year.) To facilitate the completion of this report, please refer to the Core Curriculum Matrix completed for each academic discipline.*

This year, we will focus on the first two outcomes: (1) to understand and demonstrate writing and speaking processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing, and presentation, and (3) To understand and appropriately apply modes of expression, i.e., descriptive, expository, narrative, scientific, and self-expressive, in written, visual, and oral communication.

**Please indicate if the outcome(s) is (are) related to writing (*Write On, TAMIU!*).**

**Methods of assessment to be used:**

*The explanation should identify and describe the type of assessment(s) that will be used (e.g., survey, questionnaire, observation instrument, test, rubric to evaluate performance, standardized examination, action research, interviews, etc.), who will provide the information, and how the data will be obtained.*

To assess outcome (1), a range of means are used in both ENGL 1301 and ENGL 1302 to determine the achievement of this objective: use of an analytic rubric (including 5 domains for effective writing—Focus, Organization/Development, Style and Sentence Structure,

Grammar/Mechanics, Research), for scoring diagnostic and terminal (final exam) essays; a required electronic portfolio that demonstrates success in each stage of the writing process; required student participation in the various stages of the writing process. ENGL 1301 and ENGL 1302 emphasize the recursive stages of writing (i.e., invention, drafting, revising, editing, and publication/presentation). ENGL 1301 focuses intensely on the writing process and on strategies for composing written expression while ENGL 1302 covers argument, research, and documentation. Course Instructors are responsible for reading these essays, using the analytic rubric in assessing the writing competency, and reporting scores to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning (IEP). IEP then compares the scores (student-to-student) and provides the results to the program director and department chair.

While SPCH 1311 attends to these elements, it focuses more on the latter components of editing and, most importantly, presentation. Over the course of the semester, students present four speeches in three different genres during the semester (persuasive, informative, and ceremonial), which are rated according to a rubric developed by the National Communication Association. Math 2371 focuses on enhancing students' communication skills in mathematics. This course also uses a variety of methods in assessing this outcome, including a required portfolio for which students produce at least two drafts toward a final paper; students also give an oral presentation twice (once to the professor and once to the class) before receiving a final grade.

ENGL 2311 takes a problem-based learning (PBL) approach, with students analyzing rhetorical situations and producing a variety of documents specific to the professional workplace (e.g., reports, proposals, correspondence). Students work toward competency in all stages of the writing process, including invention, research, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Feedback is provided by the instructor at multiple stages of the writing process.

Writing success will be evaluated based on an analytic rubric for measuring: the extent to which the document addresses the assignment prompt; formatting requirements; effectiveness of organization, development, syntax, grammar and punctuation (mechanics). Individual progress will be evaluated by comparing a document of a specific genre (e.g. formal business letter) assigned early in the semester with another assigned at the end of the semester. In the future, year-to-year comparative analyses will also be made based on an appropriate sampling of student work in all ENGL 2311 sections.

In regard to outcome (3), ENGL 1301 and ENGL 1302 require that successful students write essays in a variety of genres with an "average writing competency." Again, a range of means are used in both ENGL 1301 and ENGL 1302 to determine the achievement of this objective: use of assignment-specific rubrics for scoring individual assignments; use of analytic rubric for scoring diagnostic and terminal (final exam) essays; a required electronic portfolio that demonstrates success in each stage of the writing process; required student participation in the various stages of the writing process; multiple required drafts of various genres (e.g., Personal Essay, Review Essay, Ethnographic Essay). Course Instructors are responsible for reading these essays, using the analytic rubric in assessing the writing competency, and reporting scores to the Department of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning (IEP). IEP then compares the scores (student-to-student) between diagnostic and terminal (final exam) essays and provides the results to the program director and department chair. SPCH 1311 requires each student to deliver four

speeches in three different genres during the semester; these are persuasive, informative, and ceremonial. The speeches are rated via a rubric developed by the National Communication Association. Students in MATH 2371 and HUM 2301 present their papers in the classroom. They also have the opportunity to participate in local and regional conferences. Students also submit a minimum of three writing reports that are evaluated by the course instructor.

**Indicate when assessment(s) will take place:**

Assessment is processed at the end of each semester for all of these courses, once all materials have been received and graded.

**Criteria/Benchmark(s) for assessing students' progress in meeting the exemplary objective(s) selected:**

We expect, in terms of the various course rubrics, that students will score between the C (2) and B (3) ranges.

Section II: Analysis of Results

**What were the results attained?**

*Describe the primary results or findings from your analysis of the information collected. This section should include an explanation of any strength(s) or weakness(es) suggested by the results.*

ENGL 1301-1302: Please see attachment, "QEP Freshman Gains 2008-2009." Overall, improvement in student writing competency "improved significantly" during the 2008-2009 year. The implementation of the First Year Writing Program seems to be meeting the needs of students. Because final exams are not yet administered for Spring 2010, results for the 2009-2010 year are unavailable; however, once final exams are administered and assessment completed, the results will be submitted.

MATH 2371: Please see attachments, "Department of Engineering, Mathematics, and Physics," "Oral Presentation Report (December 2008)," Oral Presentation Report (December 2009)," and "Written Paper Assessment." Oral presentations improved dramatically between December 2008 and 2009, with the overall average moving from 2.8 (on a 4-point scale) to 3.5. As the attachments show, improvement occurred in all facets of the rubric. Results concerning written work are reported below for 2008. Results were discouragingly low. The results in 2009 show that students are performing toward the top of the benchmark with a B (3) average.

Beginning in the Fall semester of 2010, we will assess SPCH 1311 as follows: SPCH 1311 focuses more on the components of editing and, most importantly, presentation. Over the course of the semester, students present four speeches in three different genres during the semester (persuasive, informative, and ceremonial), which will be rated according to a rubric developed by the National Communication Association. Because we did not have this system in place last year, we will assess outcome #3, in addition to #5 and #6, in the 9/1/2010 – 5/31/2011 report.

For the same reasons, we were unable to assess Outcome #3 for ENGL 2311 this year, but we now have a system in place. ENGL 2311 takes a problem-based learning (PBL) approach, with students analyzing rhetorical situations and producing a variety of documents specific to the professional workplace (e.g., reports, proposals, correspondence). Students work toward competency in all stages of the writing process, including invention, research, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Feedback is provided by the instructor at multiple stages of the writing process.

Writing success will be evaluated based on an analytic rubric for measuring: the extent to which the document addresses the assignment prompt; formatting requirements; effectiveness of organization, development, syntax, grammar and punctuation (mechanics). Individual progress will be evaluated by comparing a document of a specific genre (e.g. formal business letter) assigned early in the semester with another assigned at the end of the semester. In the future, year-to-year comparative analyses will also be made based on an appropriate sampling of student work in all ENGL 2311 sections. As with SPCH 1311, we will assess outcome #3 in addition to outcomes #5 and #6 in the coming year's report.

**What were the conclusions reached?**

*Include a brief description of the procedure used for reaching the conclusion(s) based on the evidence collected and describe the process used to disseminate the information. Use the Meeting Minutes template found at: <http://www.tamtu.edu/adminis/iep/resources.shtml>. Once completed, submit the minutes to [integrate@tamtu.edu](mailto:integrate@tamtu.edu).*

ENGL 1301-1302: Based upon the 2008-2009 results, expectations for 2009-2010 are that students' writings will have "improved significantly." While the 2008-2009 results for "Grammar/Mechanics" "improved significantly," the expectation for this year is actually a decline; however, this is not unusual. In fact, composition research shows that students' control of surface features of language declines in response to linguistic complexity.

Based on the results of the program assessment of 2008, the Department of Engineering, Mathematics, and Physics decided to take some specific actions to address the concerns that were identified during that assessment period in the course MATH 2371. The action plan included asking students to give their presentation and write their paper twice before it would be graded, and giving students feedback on each of their attempts. The department also adjusted the writing rubric, since it was measuring results at the senior level and not at the sophomore. The results this year have shown dramatic improvement.

**Describe the action plan formulated.**

*Based on the conclusion(s), describe the action plan to be implemented to improve or maintain student learning in the core academic discipline, including a timeline for implementation.*

ENGL 1301-1302: Based upon the results thus far gleaned, the FYWP structure is successful. However, modifications have been made and implemented in the Fall 2009, and the results of these changes are yet to be determined. Expectations are that the changes will have allowed for more revision of writing that will likely result in significant improvement. The Writing Program

Director will meet with the FYWP instructors during the 2010 summer to review the results obtained and will implement changes as appropriate.

MATH 2371: As our system seems to be working, we will continue to assess and evaluate student work as we have done.

SPCH 1311 and ENGL 2311: We have systems in place to evaluate student work; we now need to develop a plan to measure progress from year to year. This will be in place by Fall 2010.

### Section III: Resources

**Resource(s) to implement action plan:**

*Describe the resources that will be needed to implement the action plan. Also indicate if the resources are currently available, or if additional funds will be needed to obtain these resources.*

Funding

- New Resources Required
- Reallocation of current funds

Physical

- New or reallocated space

Other

- Primarily faculty/staff time
- University/rule procedure change only

**Provide a narrative description and justification for requested resources (include linkage to Strategic Plan)**